

Zacharias Ministers in the Temple

Luke 1:16 And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. **:17** He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Thirdly, he would be great in his role as herald of the Messiah. He would turn many of the Jewish people to the Lord.

His ministry would be like that of Elijah, the prophet—seeking to bring the people into right relationship with God through repentance.

As G. Coleman Luck points out: His preaching would turn the hearts of careless parents to a real spiritual concern for their children. Also he would bring back the hearts of disobedient, rebellious children to the "wisdom of the just."

In other words, he would strive to gather out of the world a company of believers who would be ready to meet the Lord when He appeared. This is a worthy ministry for each of us.

Notice how the deity of Christ is implied in verses 16 and 17. In verse 16, it says that John would turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. Then in verse 17 it says that John would go before Him. To whom does the word Him refer? Obviously to the Lord their God in the preceding verse. And yet we know that John was the forerunner of Jesus. The inference then is clear. Jesus is God.

Luke 1:18 And Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years."

The aged Zacharias was struck by the sheer impossibility of the promise. Both he and his wife were too old to become the parents of a child. His plaintive question expressed all the pent-up doubt of his heart.

Luke 1:19 And the angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings.

The angel answered first by introducing himself as Gabriel (strong one of God).

Though commonly described as an archangel, he is mentioned in the Scripture only as one who stands in the presence of God and who brings messages from God to man (Dan. 8:16; 9:21).

Luke 1:20 But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time."

Because Zacharias had doubted, he would lose the power of speech until the child was born.

Whenever a believer entertains doubts concerning God's word, he loses his testimony and his song. Unbelief seals the lips, and they remain sealed until faith returns and bursts forth in praise and witness.

Luke 1:21 And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple. **:22** But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless.

Outside, the people were waiting impatiently; ordinarily the priest who was burning incense would have appeared much sooner. When Zacharias finally came out, he had to communicate with them by making signs. Then they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple.

Luke 1:23 So it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house.

After his tour of duty at the temple was completed, the priest went back home, still unable to speak, as the angel had predicted.

Luke 1:24 Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, :25 “Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.”

When Elizabeth became pregnant she went into seclusion in her home for five months, rejoicing within herself that the Lord had seen fit to free her from the reproach of being childless.

Luke 1:26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth,

And in the sixth month refers to the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy. Once again, Gabriel was sent to announce a special birth, this time to Mary in Nazareth.

Luke 1:27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary.

There is no doubt according to Scripture that Christ’s birth was a virgin birth, totally without parallel either before or since.

The virgin birth is required for several reasons: (1) to fulfill Old Testament prophecy (Gen 3:15; Isa 7:14; Jer 31:22);

(2) to avoid the Old Testament curse on the seed of Jeconiah (Jer 22:24–30), yet still be able to claim the Throne of David in the kingly line;

(3) to be in accord with the theological implications of the inspiration of the Scriptures and Christ’s sinless humanity. Through the miraculous virgin conception, Christ avoided receiving a sinful nature;

(4) to avoid receiving a human father. Christ already had a Father, and it would be unsuitable to have a second one;

(5) to avoid creating a new person, as is done in all normal conceptions. Mary’s conception of Christ was to be the incarnation of an already existing person.

Luke 1:28 And having come in, the angel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!”

The angel addressed Mary as one who was highly favored, one whom the Lord was visiting with special privilege. Two points should be noted here: (1) The angel did not worship Mary or pray to her; he simply greeted her. (2) He did not say that she was “full of grace,” but highly favored.

Luke 1:29 But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. :30 Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

Mary was understandably troubled by this greeting; she wondered what it meant. The angel calmed her fears, then told her that God was choosing her to be the mother of the long-awaited Messiah.

Luke 1:31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. :32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. :33 And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”

Notice the important truths which are enshrined in the annunciation: The real humanity of the Messiah—you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son.

His deity and His mission as Savior—and shall call His name JESUS (meaning Jehovah is the Savior).

His essential greatness—He will be great, both as to His Person and His work.

His identity as the Son of God—and will be called the Son of the Highest.